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RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE

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SIPDIS

AF/W FOR DIRECTOR
IN GTIP FOR AMBASSADOR LAGON
IN GTIP FOR VERONICA ZEITLIN
AF/RSA FOR LINDA MUNCY
IN NIAMEY FOR RICHARD ROBERS
IN LOME FOR SUSAN WALKE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: ELAB KCRM KWMN PRUM PREF GH
SUBJECT: GHANA TIP CASE UPDATE

REF: SECSTATE 77742

¶1. (SBU) Summary: An EMBOFF visited northern Ghana July 31 to observe conditions of children rescued in July 17 raid. The children are in generally good condition, but resources for their continued welfare are limited. The Koranic teacher arrested for holding the children is now out on bail. The authorities are attempting to ascertain the fitness of the parents before releasing the children.

¶2. (SBU) An EMBOFF traveled July 31 to Tamale, in Ghana's Northern Region, to investigate further the case of the fifteen rescued children. The children range in age from approximately five to fifteen. They are currently staying at a shelter operated by the Department of Social Welfare, located about twenty kilometers from Tamale. At the time of the visit, the children were being cared for by a social worker and cook. An inspection of the house found it to be orderly and reasonably clean. Water is collected from roof drainage into two tanks. There are some issues involving sanitation. The children have beds and have been issued some used clothing. The shelter is near a government clinic where the children have been receiving limited medical attention.

¶3. (SBU) The children are thin but are gaining weight. One is being treated for malaria, and two others for ring worm. The social worker reported to EMBOFF that the children have low levels of trust and limited social skills. When the EMBOFF asked, the children said they wanted to return to their parents. Two of the children are Togolese, one from Niger, with the rest from Ghana. The children have not been attending school, although they have received training in the Koran, and one of the older children has memorized long verses. The children are now receiving some instruction. The social worker told EMBOFF that one of the children might be the daughter of the arrested teacher.

¶4. (SBU) EMBOFF met with the Deputy Regional Police Superintendent. The teacher is now out on bail, but is required to report to the police at regular intervals. The Police Service and Social Welfare Department are attempting to screen the parents before releasing the children, to determine why the parents gave the children to the teacher. (Note: The practice of parents handing over children to relatives or others to use for labor, sometimes in return for cash, does occur in Ghana, especially within economically stretched families. End Note). According to the Deputy Superintendent, this process could take weeks or months.

¶5. (SBU) CDA Sue K. Brown has been able to secure funding to maintain the children for a limited time. A local businessman has agreed to provide funding for one month's support for the children, 2,000 Ghana cedis, or approximately \$1,800. Additional funding may be possible if needed, The

funds will be directed through an NGO, the Enslavement Prevention Alliance of West Africa, which is currently providing support for the children. CDA Brown also spoke with the Special Advisor to President Kufuor, Ms. Chinery-Hesse, who agreed to contact the Ministry of Women and Children regarding the case.

¶6. (SBU) POLOFF spoke with Patience Quaye of the CID about the case. She believes that the teacher should not have been released on bail, under Ghanaian law. Quaye said that the plan is to eventually bring the children to Accra. Quaye has met with the Public Prosecutor concerning the teacher. She plans to meet with the local IOM office later this week.

¶7. (U) Quaye is now dealing with four child rescue cases, involving respectively 12, 15, 155 and 15 children (the Tamale case). The case involving 155 children was reported in the August 4 media. The children were being transported from Ghana's Central Region in four fifteen mini-vans to Cote d'Ivoire, where they were expected to work in the fishing and agriculture sectors. The four adult drivers were arrested. One of the other cased involved the transport of Togolese children to CDI to work in the cocoa sector.

¶8. (SBU) Comment. With four major child rescues in the past month, the Ghana Police Service is demonstrating a commitment to countering trafficking in persons. The problem, as demonstrated by the Tamale case, is that the government has not provided the necessary social service resources to adequately provide for victims' welfare. We will continue to monitor and report on this matter. End Comment.

BROWN